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AUTHOR	Gudenberg, Karl A.
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ABSTRACT

Rural work-education councils are free-standing voluntary associations of community leaders averaging around 21 to 25 voting members who are organized by task-specific action committees working to improve and expand educational and economic development options and thus ease the education-to-work transition in rural America. There are currently three principal successful rural work-education councils organizational models. These are the local nexus, the state nexus, and the national nexus. Included among the factors affecting collaborative education/economic development are parallel human resource development, collaboration at all levels within and without the community, formation of manageable objectives and initiatives, attention to the energy needs and directions of rural economics, and reappraisal of values by rural communities. Several distinguishing elements are critical in determining the appropriate council model, including indices of economic well-being, community socio-economic stratification, institutional development, and the nature and types of educational and training resources. While different rural conditions and needs may require different organizational models, all rural work-education councils need the involvement and support of a broad cross-section of community residents. In addition, there are several functions that most rural work-education councils should undertake. Among these are information and data retrieval, development, dissemination, and utilization; maintenance of a support role for existing institutions and groups; minimizing replication of services; and maintenance of a mutually beneficial relationship between process and outcomes. (Related reports on American rural development are available separately through ERIC--see note.) (MN)

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TOWARD A MORE RATIONAL EDUCATION-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CONNECTION IN RURAL AMERICA: THE COLLOBORATIVE MODEL

Karl A. Gudenberg
Rural Program Officer
Center for Education and Work
National Institute for Work & Learning
Washington, D.C.

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General Characteristics of Education to Work Transition in Rural America

In a nation that is overwhelmingly metropolitan, both in population and outlook, it has been difficult to draw attention to issues involving rural areas. The situation, however, is changing and it is long overdue. It is certainly no easy task to obtain accurate and detailed analyses of rural problems, partly because the vocabulary used by demographers and statisticians is woefully inadequate when dealing with the diversity of populations that do not live in "urban places." The term "rural" is defined differently by government agencies: The Bureau of the Census defines as rural those places with populations of less than 2,500, while the Department of Labor defines as rural those counties where a majority of the people live in places of less than 2,500 population. Another term commonly used is "non-metropolitan" -- referring to counties with a population of less than 50,000. However, none of these terms covers the wide array of social, and environmental conditions that characterize non-urban places. Rural farm areas vary from widely scattered wheat farms to compact citrus or avocado groves. There are small towns organized around activities such as fishing, mining or logging, each with distinctive cultural and social elements. There are small cities that serve as business, communication, transport, and governmental centers in the outlying counties of states across the country.

If there is a practical reality that forces discussion of such diversity under the single concept of non-metropolitan, or rural, it must be understood that the resulting information places us in a position analagous to an Eskimo confronted with trying to describe snow with one word.

It must be recognized that many of the problems facing Americans in rural areas are common to all Americans. The fundamental transformation of the

economy, and the attendant altered occupational structure, have created chronic unemployment and underemployment problems that have affected urban and rural Americans, alike, since the early 1960's. Jobs, particularly productive work opportunities, for young persons have virtually disappeared, in and out of cities.

Yet, the setting affects dramatically the forms these problems take and the solutions that might be considered. The distinctive features of rural life give a starkness to the problem of unemployment and underemployment. Rural areas have both limits and resources that must be considered in developing meaningful solutions.

What do we know about this rural population? A great many U.S. residents live in non-metropolitan areas. In 1970, 63 million people, or 31 percent of the population, resided in such environments, according to the U.S. Census (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, 1975: 3, Table A). Until recently, there had been a significant and consistent decline in the non-metropolitan population from year to year. The percentage of the population living in rural areas has decreased from 46.4 in 1940, to 43.9 in 1950, 37.0 in 1960, 31.4 in 1970, and then to 27.2 in 1974 (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1975: 3, Table A).

In very recent years, however, there has been a significant change in the pattern of growth rates in the United States. Between 1970 and 1974, the actual rate of growth was <u>greater</u> for non-metropolitan areas than for metropolitan areas -- 5.0 percent growth compared to 3.6 percent respectively. However, while central cities in large metropolitan areas have suffered a net population loss, suburban populations have increased at rates even higher than those of rural areas (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1975: 5, Table E).

Independent of population shifts, the close to one-third of the population residing in non-metropolitan areas deserves attention. Moreover, the initial signs of change in population movements suggest another concern. Strategies for dealing with the problems of rural Americans can no longer be based on the assumption that they will be moving to metropolitan areas.

Economic indicators show a general pattern of disadvantage for non-metropolitan populations. There are sharp differences in income. The 1973 median family income in non-metropolitan areas was $10,327, a figure somewhat lower than the median family income of $11,343 reported for residents of central cities, and well below the $14,007 reported in the suburban rings (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, 1975: 15, Table P). Directly related is the finding that poverty is somewhat more common in non-metropolitan than in urban areas. While the rural population comprised less than 30 percent of the total population in 1973, 40.1 percent of all persons falling below the poverty level were residents of such areas (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1975: 16, Table R). In other words, while in 1973 the proportion of individuals earning below the poverty line for the nation as a whole was 13.7 percent; it was 19.1% for non-metropolitan areas. (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1975: 16, Table R).

One factor which has a dramatic effect on the economic structure of rural areas is the geometric increase in the productivity without a corresponding increase in demand which would call for a simultaneous increase in employment. As one economist observes:

> "Gross factor productivity, i.e. output in ratio to all inputs, has risen sharply and continuously since 1920. Even more spectacularly, the charted indexes of total labor input and of output per man-hour have diverged at almost right angles since 1940. If agricultural output had faced an indefinitely expansible market, total production could have been more greatly increased and thereby enabled the retention of a greater proportion of the earlier farm labor force. But the market has not had sufficient absorptive capacity to offset gains in productivity, consequently,

> the intermediating mechanism relating increases in productivity to labor force adjustments has been the generally adverse farm price and income outlook. Given this outlook, thousands of farm youth have had to decide, individually, whether to stay with the family occupation, and fewer thousands of farmers have had to decide, also individually, whether to continue."
> (Fuller, 1970: 20)

According to Ray Marshall, current Secretary of Labor, the transition problems of rural youth are shaped significantly by these economic conditions. These conditions, in effect, establish a number of barriers to the full development of rural youth.

The rural economic base poses significant problems for rural young people. The lack of occupational diversity means that few job and on-the-job training opportunities are available and role models for jobs other than farmwork, marginal and blue-collar positions are scarce (Marshall, 1976). Private and public sector employment opportunities are severely limited, and although the location of more manufacturing plants in rural areas, especially in the Southeast, has resulted in somewhat more diversified employment opportunity, a large proportion of these jobs are going to workers imported from urban areas (Miles, 1973). The problem is compounded by inferior labor market information systems and inadequate educational and vocational preparation.

The need for more accurate and complete labor market information and occupational counseling in rural areas is acute. Responses to a 1974 survey of rural youth indicated that the 800 male and female high school seniors in the sample had very limited understanding of the world of work, were insecure and suspicious about their prospects for employment, and were unfamiliar with the federal-state employment service. A recent survey of job placement services provided by public school systems in the United States reveals that only 35 percent of school districts with fewer than 25,000 students had such services as compared to 71 percent of the districts with 25,000 students or

more (Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1976). Federal and state placement agencies (including the U.S. Employment Service) have limited coverage of, and thus limited effectiveness in, rural areas (Marshall, 1976).

Educational attainment is another area where sharp differences between non-metropolitan and metropolitan populations are apparent. In 1974, in the nation as a whole, 53.9 percent of non-metropolitan residents over age 25 had completed high school, in contrast to 59.8 percent in central cities and 68.5 percent in the suburban rings. Within the non-metropolitan group, more exacting breakdowns emphasize these differences. In counties with no town larger than 2,500, only 42.5 percent of the adults had completed high school, compared with 52.8 percent in counties with a town of 2,500 to 24,999, and 62.0 percent in those designated non-metropolitan with a town of 25,000 or more (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1975: 54, Table 9). Even these figures are a bit deceptive since as high a proportion of non-metropolitan as urban youth aged 16 or 17 are enrolled in school. The drop-off occurs rapidly in the next higher age group, because significantly lower proportions of rural youth are enrolled in higher education (Sanders, 1977: 103). This is consistent with a great number of studies that have shown much lower levels of educational attainment among rural and farm adolescents, in comparison to their urban counterparts.

Adequate educational preparation is a crucial element in a smooth school-to-work transition; unfortunately, rural educational systems labor under the burdens of inadequate resources, training and support services. Vocational schools, in many instances, are still directing students into traditional rural job paths, mainly agriculture or homemaking. During the period between 1950 and 1966 when farming jobs declined to the lowest point in decades, enrollment in vocational agriculture rose to a new high (Department of Agriculture, 1969). These educational and employment difficulties are often

exacerbated by geographic isolation, inadequate medical and social services, and a pattern of out-migration to urban areas that further contributes to the depletion of an already inadequate tax base in rural communities.

The Marion County, Oregon Youth Study offers some insights regarding rural youth in transition. In one of few on-going, longitudinal studies dealing with one local area, early results are consistent with findings of national studies. A medium-sized county of 120,888 population in 1,175 square miles, Marion County's 19 incorporated communities include only 59 percent of the total population. Only Central City has a population of over 5,000; two-thirds of the 19 towns have fewer than 1,000 residents. The balance of the population resides in unincorporated, predominantly rural areas (Polk, 1977).

Findings of the study to date indicate that a good percentage of Marion County youth have already been confronted with the necessity of moving. Ten years after high school graduation, 52 percent of the young persons reside outside the county. High school performance appears to be related to the migration pattern. High achievers move more frequently to metropolitan or urban settings as young adults (57 percent) than low academic achievers (44 percent) or dropouts (38 percent). At the same time, all these groups indicate they would prefer living in a rural area or a small town, as do many Americans, nationwide (Gallup 77). The preference to live in a rural area was expressed by 55 percent of the total group, 45 percent of the dropouts, 58 percent of the low achievers, and 53 percent of the high achievers, though the last group is more likely to be found in urban areas. This data tells a sad story: the most qualified youth are leaving rural places, even though many of them would prefer to stay if educational and -- perhaps more importantly -- economic opportunities were available to them.

The imperative is obvious. Greater and more varied options regarding education and economic development need to be brought about in rural America. If the recent population growth in non-metropolitan areas continues, it may encourage and provide a new basis for this work. Migration back to smaller towns and rural areas can revitalize these markets and create a demand for more personnel and government services. Technological innovation can support this movement: electronic communication and information retrieval devices now make it possible for certain kinds of professional work to be done far away from urban centers. In addition, if government programs and policies can become more responsive to these newly emerging conditions, a variety of new opportunities may become available to Americans in rural communities. The challenge in rural America is to insure that these new opportunities will enhance the quality of community life and will reflect community values. A good place to start is with rural American youth.

Background of Rural Work-Education Councils

Rural American communities have a multiplicity of needs. Access to and impact on the decision making which affects their well-being is one of the most important. Critical to this well-being is the profound need for the development of more numerous, varied and effective education and economic development opportunities. These opportunities should be based on a real congruence between locally-determined needs, capacities and goals, and those of the host of public and private enabling, governing and serving entities at state, regional and national levels. Achieving congruence is elusive and difficult. It is being significantly advanced, however, through the "collaborative idea": as promulgated by Willard Wirtz in The Boundless Resource: A Prospectus for an Education/Work Policy and as implemented by members of the National Work-Education Consortium and the National Manpower Institute.

Collaborative effort encourages the participation of a variety of sectors in organized activities which endeavor to improve the transition of rural Americans between education and work. Collaboration, by definition and form, is holistic in nature. Collaboration as pursued by rural work-education councils has focused on human resource development as the fundamental linchpin in the broader consideration of community development, i.e. educational, economic, ecological, social and political.

Rural work-education collaboratives are local action forums which bring together a variety of community interests around the common concern of improving rural education-to-work transition. Collaboratives seek both to identify and to resolve problems that impede progress through joint community deliberation and action. Local collaboration is supported and sustained by a third party intermediary, the National Manpower Institute. NMI generates and supports linkages with the state, regional and national interests that exercise influence over and assume responsibility for local rural education-to-work transition and the 28 members of the National Work-Education Consortium.

A cross-section of local interests are involved in local rural work-education councils. They determine and implement their own action agenda. Representation includes leaders from education, agriculture, corporate and family economic enterprises, organized labor, government, advocacy groups, and community enhancement organizations as well as individuals such as parents and youth.

These neutral action forums of rural work-education councils are free-standing voluntary associations of community leaders averaging around 21 to 25 voting members. They are generally organized by task specific action committees. They are served by a full-time secretarial staff consisting minimally of a director and support staff. The core secretarial staff requires, on the average, an annual operating budget of $35,000. This core

staff is augmented by both paid and volunteer assistants who conduct a host of activities. The Mid-Michigan Community Action Council of Gratiot County, Michigan, for example, currently involves over 1,100 volunteers in career exploration, enrichment, job generation and placement activities.

Local work-education councils support their activities by a variety of ways and means, from both public and private sources as well as local, state and national funding sources. Such include, but are not limited to, membership contributions and fees, local tax assessment revenues, CETA and Vocational Education programs, private foundation grants, a variety of federal grant programs including FIPSE and Career Education, among others and service fees.

Rural work-education councils provide a framework for the "process" of involving a growing cross-section of community sector leaders and representatives in interrelated sets of activities which lead from the more specific to the more general improvement and enlargement of educational and economic development options.

Heterogeneity is the hallmark of rural America. Many rural communities have unique value orientations and styles of life. These are explored, built on and reflected in a variety of mechanisms and processes of decision making and implementation.

Particular care is taken to develop efforts that involve, affect, and benefit a cross-section of the community. The targeting of any one stratum of the community -- be it the poor, the middle-class, or the privileged -- is avoided since it would result in exclusionary effects, antithetical to the concept of collaboration. Rural education and economic transition efforts deliberately seek to improve the general quality of community life for both the present and the future. Short and long range goals are pursued simultaneously and symbiotically.

However, the preservation and enhancement of local communities is no mean task. Development schemes that seek to make rural life more viable, seek to maintain a reasoned balance between human and ecological imperatives. Many communities are resistant to outside values and influences, particularly legislation and programs developed without significant involvement of local citizenry. Rural work-education councils attempt to ameliorate this situation and move purposefully toward achieving a more effective linkage between local community needs and extra-community resources.

Councils capitalize on the generally high state of community-mindedness evidenced by their communities. The involvement of a cross-section of rural communities in the fashioning of models and processes by which improved rural education-to-work opportunities can be achieved is important. Care is exercised to encourage rural communities to develop their own variations of the collaborative process. The opportunity to compare different types of mechanisms and processes is explored and refined through the on-going relationships fostered by the National Work-Education Consortium and the National Manpower Institute.

Anna Smith, Executive Director of "Clarinda: Town of Tomorrow," Clarinda, Iowa, suggests that rural areas appear to be more "involvement-oriented" while urban areas appear to be more "issue oriented." That is to say, rural residents seem to be more concerned with their involvement in overall community enhancement initiatives as distinct from metropolitan residents who appear to be more concerned with single issue concerns. Of the two, the former is probably more encompassing and more enduring. "Involvement" represents a sound general principal upon which rural work-education councils build collaboration for improved rural education and economic development.

The importance of community involvement is underscored by recent analyses on community development efforts. In "Education in Rural America: A

Reassessment of Conventional Wisdom" edited by Jonathan Sher, it is pointed out:

> In community after community...the story is depressingly similar. Rural development that has not been controlled by its alleged beneficiaries has not resulted in any substantial alteration or improvement of the recipients' social or economic conditions. Community based control of development by no means assures its eventual success...it does at least ensure that development priorities are aligned with the perceived interests of those individuals most directly affected by them.

Rural work-education councils are proving to be effective in involving a cross-section of rural communities in the development of increased and amplified education and economic development options.

Current Rural Collaborative Models

One of the most important factors in the development of a rural work-education council is its organizing nexus. The organizational model and its support mechanism to a considerable degree shape the substance, resources generation and management, information and data generation and utilization as well as influence brokering, technical assistance, networking, and the development of more effective education to work transition policies and programs. Adaption and implementation of work-education council agenda by lead constitutent membership is a crucial factor which also is significantly influenced by the organizational nexus.

There are currently three principal rural work-education councils' organizational models:

- Local Nexus
- State Nexus
- National Nexus

Local Nexus

Mid-Michigan Community Action Council
Alma, Michigan

This work-education council is in its seventh year of operation. It began in the community of Alma (population 10,000) with a primary concern for expanding

and diversifying career exploration and options for in-school youth. The council gradually expanded its activities to cover the entire County of Gratiot (population 40,000) with six school districts. It organized and orchestrated a volunteer network which currently numbers over 1,100 person whose vocations range from custodians and mechanics to veternarians and attorneys.

The activities of career exploration gradually expanded to include job creation, temporary and permanent, gaining access to and utilizing the Michigan Occupation Information System, economic development for the county, and curriculum development initiation in the middle and secondary schools (to achieve better congruence between employment preparers and employment providers).

The executive director and staff have prepared the "Gratiot County Overall Economic Development Plan." This effort involved building coalitions between a variety of competing municipalities and organizations in order to attract new employment opportunities. Initial efforts were thwarted by pronounced adversary relationships. For example, three local Chambers' of Commerce competed for the same manufacturers, with no one the winner. MMCAC began to involve such groups in mutually complimentary initiatives. Such efforts have produced 400 new permanent jobs and over 800 temporary jobs for the young people of the county. It has steadfastly maintained an agenda which calls for:

- Expanding Career Education
- Expanding Economic Education
- Expanding School-Community Dialogue
- Achieving Full Employment

The council began with safe and "acceptable" initiatives that concentrated on youth. The need for increased economic development became apparent as organizations, groups and individuals were connected and involved. The network of 1,100 volunteers, in addition to active council members, through their involvement in

action initiatives became more willing to work on the expansion of job development opportunities. This included providing jobs to teenagers, getting these youths involved in youth enterprises and increasingly banding a variety of groups together in an effort to attract new employment providers. Municipal and interest rivalries gradually gave way to a heightened appreciation that the most important resource in the county was the human resource. The potential of this resource could only be utilized if it was nurtured by providing increased and more varied training and employment opportunities.

The council began in a local community which had a high interest in improving the education to work transition of its youth. It has been considerably strengthened through its affiliation with the National Manpower Institute and the National Work-Education Consortium during the last three years. It is a viable and strong council which has broadened its scope of activity to neighboring counties and has recently obtained a state grant of over $200,000 for expanding the collaborative idea to two neighboring counties. It is increasingly being looked to as a rural model in Michigan by both the public and private sector. The evolutionary development of the council has strengthened and intensified the involvement of persons and groups from relevant sectors locally, regionally and at the state level.

State Nexus

Industry Education Council of California
Burlingame, California

The IECC was formed five years ago with an initial budget of $120,000. It currently has an operating budget of $1.2 million with an estimated like amount in in-kind services. It is active in twenty communities throughout the state. Six are small town service centers in rural areas. It operates a variety of twenty-six demonstration projects.

The 75 member Board of Directors is made up of major California business, industry, labor, government and education enterprises. The principal leaders of these interest sectors have formed a series of task forces whose demonstration projects are developed and implemented by a secretariat and support staff consisting of both central and field staff. The principal organizing aegis is the private sector with active participation by principal public sector representatives.

IECC is a not for profit, tax exempt, free standing, voluntary organization whose primary purpose is to improve and expand career and economic education to work transition of youth in California schools.

IECC endeavors to realize its goals by serving as a statewide umbrella through which local Industry-Education Councils and other such organizations receive a broad range of services. These include: technical assistance, substantive and methodological; information and data retrieval, development and utilization; research and demonstration programs and services development; and assistance in needs determination and fulfillment, regarding education to work transition. IECC concentrates on improving linkages between the private and public sectors, particularly between state and local enabling and enforcing authorities, agencies and corporations. IECC is particularly adept in encouraging the participation of local branch enterprises in rural community education and work development through parent corporate involvement and suasion.

IECC concentrates its activities on improving linkages between institutions that result in more effective and meaningful education and work transition opportunities for a variety of persons in local communities. IECC endeavors to generate greater responsiveness to the needs of both clients and institutions.

Several of its exemplary programs deal with migrant and handicapped youth and with experience based secondary education:

- Migrant Youth. A cross-agency program that brings together education i.e., migrant, compensatory, bi-lingual, vocational. career and general, employment services, U.S. Department of Labor, community farm groups, organized labor, and employers, plus programs such as CETA, YETPA, NYC, PIC in Yuba City, Marysville and Modesto. The program perscriptively plots the education/training needs of this target youth population and develops complementary services both in the school and community.

- The All-Work Experience High School. A rural secondary program in which all courses in 10th through 12th grades have a work exploration and work experience component. Teachers are responsible for linking their curricula to work related interests. It sends rural students from the Washington-Union High School District to Fresno work sites. It is supported by funding from Vocational Education, Career Education, Compensatory and Migrant Education, ESEA, among others. The private sector provides in-kind resources at work-learning stations. Students spend time in academic courses and parallel time at work sites in a practical education-work module.

- Handicapped Youth. A cross-agency program similar to the Migrant Project with a focus on education i.e., special, general, vocational and career, employment services, rehabilitation services, employment of the handicapped, and community based organizations with interests in the handicapped. Supportive services to both the handicapped and employers are provided as well as work placement positions.

IECC's state wide operation permits it to identify general education to work impediments and identify and select appropriate communities and institutions which are receptive and ready to be involved in demonstration initiatives. It capitalizes on its corporate, public, and state membership to generate local community involvement of branch organizations e.g., branch banks, agro-industrial corporations, among others.

These efforts are making it possible for IECC to focus increasingly on human resource devlopment as a parallel to economic development. Henry Weiss, Executive Vice President of IECC suggests: "Experienced based cooperative

agency processes and actions are essentially constructed around manageable experiences which are commensurate with the digestive capacities of all of its participants and then are expanded to rural economic and human development initiatives which may be transferred from one rural community to another through an adopt/adapt approach."

National Nexus

National Manpower Institute and the
National Work-Education Consortium
Washington, D.C.

The National Manpower Institute (NMI) is a not for profit corporation concerned with transitions throughout life between education and work with the development of an education-work policy. During the last decade, NMI has been active in the development of community solutions to education-work problems. It has fostered collaboration among employers, union leaders, educators, and government officials to deal with the youth transition to work, to increase education opportunities for adults, to allow more productive lives for American seniors, and to deal with the pressing problems of working women.

The Institute approaches these concerns through action-oriented programs, broad consultation, policy development, information exchange, experimentation, and research. Its initial agenda published in 1975 in The Boundless Resource: A Prospectus for an Education/Work Policy, by Willard Wirtz, Chairman of the Board and NMI staff.

The Institute carries out its concerns with education to work transition in rural America through its Center for Education and Work.

The Center's current rural sphere of activities includes ongoing partnership with six work-education councils operating in rural areas.

Bethel Area Community Education-Work Council, Bethel, Maine

Community Education-Work Council of Northwestern Vermont,
St. Albans, Vermont

Industry-Education Council of California, Burlingame, California

Mid-Michigan Community Action Council, Alma, Michigan

Sioux Falls Area Education-Work Council, Sioux Falls, South Dakota;

Tri-County Industry-Education-Labor Council, East Peoria, Illinois

These rural councils are members of the National Work-Education Consortium which is composed of thirty members who are active in thirty-five states.

In addition to the state of California, with six rural work-education councils, there are five states where the state governments in collaboration with NMI, are actively developing a host of new work-education councils in small towns and rural areas. These states are:

Connecticut
Minnesota
North Carolina
South Carolina
South Dakota

The Center has developed A Charter for Improved Rural Youth Transition in collaboration with local rural work-education councils. It has been and continues to be involved in providing technical assistance on joint education and economic development to rural communities throughout the United States.

The Center has conducted national and regional conferences on "Improving Rural Education and Work Transition" and is currently conducting a state wide program "The Education and Work Connection in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania - 1980" in conjunction with the Education-Work Council of Erie City and County, with a principal emphasis on rural areas of the state.

The Center maintains an ongoing information retrieval and dissemination function for the Consortium and over 6,000 groups and organizations concerned with education and work transition in the United States. It provides networking functions to a range and variety of communities which experience a host of education and work transition problems and are attempting to solve them. The

Center has been particularly instrumental in linking rural and metropolitan work-education councils in mutually beneficial endeavors.

It has also expanded the opportunities for rural councils to impact on legislation, administrative practices, programs, and services on behalf of their communities. It has promulgated greater collaboration between private, national and regional corporations and individuals, groups, and organizations involved in local rural community educational and economic development. As an intermediary it has provided both catalytic and developmental liaison between local rural communities and state governments and authorities.

The growing and evolving experiencially based realization that small towns and rural areas require particular encouragement and support for linking education and economic development has moved the Center to actively pursue this aim with a number of federal departments, e.g., Labor, Health, Education, and Welfare, Agriculture, Commerce, as well as national rural advocacy groups and rural members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.

In 1976 the NMI set out to identify communities of all sizes and environments where the climate for the development of collaborative councils was right and the interest was high, e.g. Bethel, Maine and St. Albans, Vermont. It also identified rural communities where collaborative mechanisms of some kind were already in place e.g., Mid-Michigan Community Action Council, Alma, Michigan and The Community Education Center for Community Change, Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Where a mechanism did exist, the NMI would provide improved staffing, expanded supportive services and technical assistance, and provide methods for focusing on improved education to work transition. Working as a third party intermediary in those areas where interest was high, but no mechanism was in place, NMI aided in developing collaborative linkages and increasing knowledge of collaborative processes.

Twenty communities were selected and formed the basis for the National Work-Education Council Consortium. Eight of these communities were either small towns or rural areas.

During the last three years NMI has identified and worked with a variety of other local rural communities and states in the development and sustainment of collaborative mechanisms and processes. It has been involved in an ongoing information development effort which increasingly suggests that education to work transition efforts in rural communities inevitably evolve from "safe" educational/career enrichment and work experience to economic development efforts. This evolution requires steadfast and careful development which must proceed at a pace comensurate with the self-determination and the will of local communities, combined with non-threatening support from a third party intermediary. Progress can not be speedy and it may not be artificially pushed along. If pushed, rural councils become moribund. However, when rural councils proceed deliberately, they inevitably move toward the complimentary integration of education and economic development.

General Factors Affecting Rural Collaborative Education-Economic Development

Rural economic development cannot occur without parallel human resource development. All too frequently, rural inhabitants, particularly those with limited academic and vocational achievement are relegated to supportive, low income position in economic development efforts. Deficient and sparse rural education and training programs and services have resulted in the importation of skilled personnel and managers. Thus, in the main, only limited improvement of local educational and economic development efforts occurs.

Human resource development, traditionally, has been the purview of the educational system. This has occured through post-secondary programs, as well as public and private alternative educational/training programs and services. The public educational system, frequently, is the most important institution in a rural community. It is expected to uphold and promulgate traditional values and life-styles,

as well as prepare its youth to participate in and contribute to the survival and development of their community in the future. It is frequently both the pursuer of the status quo and the principal agent for change. This paradoxical role has permitted other institutions in rural communities to exert a disproportionate influence on community development endeavors.

Human resource development requires a good deal of linkage efforts between a host of public and private institutions and agencies, within and without rural communities. Often, the existing linkages involve vested leadership interests that do not want to change the status quo. This is particularly true in communities where there are gross inequities in the socio-economic well-being of the residents. Upon examination, existing linkages between the community and enabling and enforcement agencies and groups from the outside are found to be exclusionary, limited and compartmentalized. They are frequently self-serving rather than community serving.

Joint education and economic development requires collaboration at all levels, within and without the community. This collaboration must represent the interests of the total community. Targeting of any one interest or group needs to be avoided.

Using an umbrella mechanisms such as rural work education councils can be the best method of facilitating real collaboration. The participants in such councils should represent a cross-section of interests which promulgate the community development ideas of area residents. Participants should be willing to commit time and expertise, and assume responsibility for the implementation and financing of jointly determined ventures.

It should be understood, however, that local educational and economic development obtains impetus, authority, governance, resources, restrictions, and opportunities from both within and outside of local rural communities. The primacy of local

conditions needs to symbiotically related to the interests of groups and individuals outside of local rural communities who have either an actual or prospective interest and impact on such communities. The nature of the local needs and the types of initiatives deemed appropriate help to determine what kind of initial organizing nexus should be employed.

Regardless of the organizing nexus, work-education councils should not be given impetus through mandates, legislation, or otherwise. Their growth and development optimally results from self actualized awareness of needs, self-determined goals to fulfill these needs, and an action agenda which encourages and demands the participation of as many interest sectors as possible in the resolution of problems.

All participants in the collaborative process should be simultaneously involved in "doing" and "learning" experiences in which method, substance, and outcomes lead to more encompassing and far-reaching education and economic development.

Rural work-education councils need to pursue manageable objectives and initiatives. Those should be initially modest and realizable, providing stepping stones for increasingly more involved and difficult undertakings. A range and diversity of short and long term goals need to be established simultaneously. Opportunities should exist for a variety of persons from rural communities to be involved. Involvement should not be based solely on the amount and degree of power a particular interest group wields economically, politically, socially, culturally, educationally, or otherwise. Opportunities must be provided for persons with little or no power or influence, including youth, minorities, women, and the handicapped, among others to become involved. This may be accomplished, for example, in data gathering and survey work to obtain more relevant and usable information on the standards of rural economic well being, land use, occupational needs assessments and projections, and community resource inventories, among others.

Particular attention needs to be given to the emerging needs and direction of rural economies. Rural economies, be they agricultural, extractive, recreational, manufacturing or mixed, are invariably dependent on domestic and international markets far removed from the bucolic self-sufficiency of an earlier America. Decisions by the Chicago Board of Trade and the Kremlin may have as much, if not more, impact on the wheat farmers of the Dakotas as do events in neighboring counties only a few miles away.

Rural economic developments and their attendant needs frequently necessitate a reappraisal of values by rural communities. A variety of groups with distinctly different value orientations and historical benchmarks need to determine the changing character of their communities and to learn vicariously from other communities who have already experienced profound changes, for the worse and for the better.

Rural economic development, more often than not, is interrelated with the broader economic conditions of regional, national, and international developments. Networking with broader spheres of economic and human resources development needs to be simultaneously pursued with local collaboration and networking. As Henry Weiss of IECC suggests: "Networking that delivers from the bottom-up, top down, and middle out simultaneously is the name of the game."

Despite the fact that the ultimate aim of collaborative efforts is to influence, shape and change policies which affect rural education and economic development so that they may become more relevant and equitable, policy development should be a rational outgrowth of collaborative action agenda and initiatives. In rural communities demonstrated effectiveness of procedures, programs and services generally preceeds policy changes. Great care needs to be exercised to follow the modus operandi and pace of rural institutions. When such are impediments to education and economic development the collaborative process needs to be established in a derivative fashion. Peer group structures and methods of interaction and

decision making are more responsive to the modalities of a cross-section of rural interest groups when are directed to the general improvement of small towns and rural areas.

Organizational Development of Rural Work-Education Councils

The diversity of rural conditions suggests that the organizing nexus of a work-education councils may differ from community to community. There are several distinguishing elements which may be more critical than others in determining the appropriate model.

Economic Well-Being

Indices which measure the economic well being of rural communities are all too feequently inadequate or even inappropriate. However, some of the standard indicators such as rates of unemployment and underemployment, public assistance, outmigration, productivity, capital investment and gains, enterprise decline and consolidation, construction starts, tax delinquency, etc providing an overall picture on the general economic vitality of communities.

Knowledge of a community's economic vitality can help determine the need and direction of education/work development. It also helps identify the institutions and enterprises that need to be involved in a collaborative effort.

Socio-Economic Stratification

All communities exhibit socio-economic stratification. In some, however, the stratification is more pronounced and marked by inequities. When such inequities are accompanied by spatial separation, institutional and enterprise exclusion, educational to work transition opportunities foreclosure and generally more strictured overall opportunities, the needs of communities under such circumstances may require organizing nexuses which are more open to extra community collaborative involvements and impeti.

Communities with more equitable stratification may evidence a greater capacity to deal with special needs, such as the handicapped, which cut across socio-economic lines.

Institutional Development and Infra Structure

Institutional development and leadership in rural communities is generally not as extensive nor as varied as in metropolitan areas. The formal and informal linkages within rural communities are much more in evidence, even though sometimes they tend to be exclusionary to the interests of particular groups of citizens.

Rural communities frequently do not reflect the infra structure and the concommitant functionaries, both remunerative and voluntary, which make it work. Leadership, organizational and technical development are frequently needed and their baseline status must be ascertained and understood in order to determine the nature and type of organizing nexus for collaborative development.

Nature and Types of Educational and Training Resources

Rural education and training programs are generally less numerous, varied and qualitative with some notable exceptions, than their metropolitan counterparts. Frequently the dichotomy between the professional and teaching establishment and the community at-large, which contains untapped resources of expertise, both theoretical and applied, is too severe. Facilities and programs need to be carried beyond classroom walls into the community, both rural and metropolitan.

An understanding of the nature and types of education and training available in rural communities coupled with the capacities and willingness of local communities to build on and expand such, in terms of short and long term education and economic development is vital.

Economic Development as Non-competing and Augmenting to the Established Economic Base

Community resource and needs inventories by work-education councils have

clearly demonstrated that regardless of the economic well being of rural communities, additional economic development of non-cpupetive entrprises is invariably needed and is potentially beneficial to ongoing economic enterprises e.g., New Enterprise Institute of Maine.

The involvement of both local and extra local economic enterprises representatives is crucial, initially difficult, but undeniably essential.

Economic development should not be imposed from the outside but should emanate from collaboratively determined needs and should guarantee the enhancement of existing economic enterprises and the improved vitality of rural communities.

Achieving Symbions Between Environmental and Social Needs

The decade of the seventies evidenced a marked change in the attitudes of Americans as to their residencial preferences - small towns and rural areas - (Gallup). Such preferences, however, are frequently contingent on the availability of supportive life systems which are concommitants of metropolitan living. Rural communities and livelihood pursuits have and are changing. These changes, however, must attend both environmental and social needs and preferences.

Rural communities generally desire to maintain their rural character, despite pressing needs to modify it, albeit to acceptable degrees. The crucial question is to what degree the maintenance of the rural character, given the need for balance between environmental and social demands, can be achieved, with modifications that will not destroy it.

Organizational Development of Rural Work-Education Councils

Different rural conditions and needs may require different organizational models. Regardless of the organizational model, the greater the involvement of important and relevant local interest groups in the collaborative process (one which optimizes local self-determination and development) the greater

its chance of success. The collaborative process is best served when rural towns or service centers exhibit a heightened awareness of their education to work transition needs, a readiness (by a cross section of community groups) to provide the commitment of time and resources to active involvement in resolution initiatives) and an understanding and acceptance of the collaborative idea as an "evolving decision and action process." The process should provide room for a variety of interest sectors, be they adversaries, partners or those normally disengaged or excluded groups, to become involved in peer group interactions in a community development context. The greater the understanding of the collaborative process which sets its own goals, develops its own ways and means, at its own pace, the more appropriate the local organizing nexus.

Locally organized work-education councils which develop from conditions such as these, particularly when such efforts consist of expanding membership development and involvement, resource procurement and management, and the conduct and expansion of realizable action initiatives, do not find the road easy, but may gain a strong sense of self-reliance and elan, so critical in long term community development efforts.

Work-education councils, regardless of their organizing nexus may be significantly aided by a third party intermediary which can provide networking functions, technical assistance, both methodological and substantive, and linkage functions, so critical to rural communities to gain more realistic access to and impact on the decision making which affects the education to work development in their communities.

Such relationships with third party intermediaries, however, require very delicate handling, particularly in the early stages of development. Third party intermediaries need to be catalytic and non-directive. They should facilitate but not overwhelm. Such efforts should be augmenting, not directing. Attempts should not be made to speed up the natural collaborative 'yeasting'

process. Each community has an idiom of its own and despite the great benefit of utilizing knowledge developed elsewhere, local communities are best served when they experiment and rely on their own evolving developmental processes.

Networking arrangements with consortia of other collaborative councils or state collaborative programs or services are beneficial as long as they maintain the axiom of "local primacy."

In cases where the socio-economic stratification in rural communities has produced gross inequities with marked exclusionary manifestations from community institutions and services, the organizing nexus may better serve the local development of work-education councils when it is state or national in nature. The National Manpower Institute established eleven of its twenty local work-education councils in . , way and is currently working with several states that are attempting to establish local work-education councils. This may be accomplished through both public and private sector aegis. The Industry Education Council of California is working with twenty local councils, most of which were initially organized by IEEC, which was involved in local education to work needs determination and demonstration initiatives with representatives from local institutions in task specific ventures. Such activities raised the level of awareness of local groups as to the efficacy of collaboration.

Several state governments are involved in establishing collaborative mechanisms, at the state level, through a variety of administrative aegeses. South Carolina is employing its State Occupational Coordinating Committee, North Carolina its State Vocational Advisory Council, Connecticut its Career Education Advisory Council, South Dakota its Balance of State Private Industry Council and Minnesota a Department of Education and CETA linkage unit.

These groups are in the process of indentifying a variety of rural communities in their states and providing them with small amounts of secretarial funds and the funding arrangements through local prime sponsors or balance of state

programs, to begin local rural work-education councils. Such councils will have access to the state organizing units, as well as the National Work-Education Consortium and the National Manpower Institute. This will make it possible for local rural councils to obtain technical assistance, linkage with a host of state and private sector agencies and programs, as well as other communities of similar size with similar problems elsewhere in their states or the country at large.

Such strategies may be particularly useful when the climate for collaboration is not conducive and local communities need incentives from either state and/or national organizing nexuses.

Current knowledge development efforts will hopefully identify which organization models are appropriate in varying sets of environments and circumstances.

Essential Development Elements of Rural Work-Education Councils

Heterogeneity is the hallmark of rural America. Rural communities have unique value orientations and styles of life. Those should be explored, understood, and reflected in the mechanisms and processes of collaborative decision-making to improve education to work linkage.

Certain natural and social conditions of rural America appear to contribute importantly to the development of its people. Among the most significant are a generally healthy environment, the stronger family unit, the close relationship of livelihood and vocational pursuits to nature, the blending of vocations and avocations, the strength of the work ethic, and the association of self reliance and development with community concern and service.

Reinforcing the positive qualities of rural life needs to be undertaken as an initial focal point in the development of rural work-education councils. Such efforts should lead to careful clarification and determination of local community education and economic development needs.

Rural community work-education councils need to be concerned with the involvement and support of a broad cross section of community residents. Guarantees of local self-determination needs to be assured. This should occur at every level of council activity: community value clarification, issue discernment, goal formulation, data aggregation and verification, and policy setting and implementation.

Membership in rural work-education councils should be open to anyone who contributes volunteer time to council activities. All involvements should be viewed as preludes to further participation. This requires continuously pinpointing specific needs and functions of council activiites, and a careful matching of volunteer capacities, commitment, and available time with such functions. Personal and public recognition of involvement is essential.

Periodic celebrations and assessments should take place. Such events should be widely publicized as focal points for the purpose and mission of local work-education council activities. They should serve to connect individual contributions to the overall work-education council's initiatives and to raise general public awareness as well. As councils develop, such events also may serve as general planning and policy sessions. Referenda on issues, priorities, goals, actions, and leadership could also take place.

In addition to individual volunteer participant membership, there should be organizational and interest sector membership, which comprises a cross section of community orgaizations with community enhancement or civic groups playing an important role. Particular efforts must be made to help involve groups who lack the organizational structure and leadership to participate as fully as they would like to. Councils should be particularly mindful of involving hidden constituencies.

Membership can range from the informal to the formal, depending on local conditions and preferences. Councils should, however, encourage significant

participation in all levels of endeavors and provide a sense of peer group status. Leaders of strong constituent groups as well as unaffiliated individuals should have a sense of belonging, a sense of investment and responsibility in the process.

Characteristically, the leadership of rural communities is generally small, partly as a reflection of small population size. Rural leaders are frequently involved in a variety of organizations and activities, and consequently wear many hats. It is not uncommon to observe local leaders juggling token appearances at simultaneous meetings some distances apart. The involvement of as many leaders as possible in work-education councils affairs, however, should be encouraged. Short of formal involvement, such leaders should be sought out for their support. The relatively small groups of leaders also suggests that their involvement must be appropriate and judicious.

In some rural areas, certain community groups (e.g., ethnic minorities) have traditionally avoided being publicly represented by formally recognized leaders. This "headless horseman" phenomenon needs to be understood, and particular efforts must be made to involve representatives of such groups.

A variety of leadership roles for rural work-education councils is possible. These may be single or committee, alternating or sequential, task specific or general, and formal or informal. Each community should seek its own appropriate expression. Regardless of the leadership type, it must represent as broad a cross section of the community as possible. This may mean that the leadership of rural work-education councils may evidence a melding of policy making and administrative functions.

On-going leadership development would seem to be a primary task of rural work-education councils. Such leadership development is best accomplished through involvement in action initiatives.

Goals should be realistic in nature. They should be both short and long

range and be realizable. Work-Education Councils should optimally be free-standing, neutral action forums which in method and substance reflect the values, needs and styles of rural communities.

In order to assure the free-standing, neutral action status in communities, membership needs to contribute time and commitment to operationalize council agenda, and contribute to the financial and in-kind resources. A multiple resource base is the most preferable, with a complimentary balance between local, regional, state and national funding sources.

Operating expenses and needs of rural work-education councils are of two types: secretariat and demonstration. The secretariat consists of a core staff which most typically consists of an executive director, and a secretary. Additional secretariat clerks and assistants may be warranted, depending on the nature and extent of operational activities. Salaries and support expenses for travel, communications, materials, space etc., require a budget between $35,000 and $50,000 a year.

Demonstration initiatives are responsive to the particular needs of rural communities and attempt to show the ways and means by which local programs and services can be improved. Work-education councils should avoid any activities which can be or are being conducted already. They should avoid replication of programs and services and should not be involved in the operation of programs and services on a continuing basis.

Coalition building and networking becomes an important aspect of local rural work-education council development. The organizing nexus, be it bottom up or top down, is greatly envigorated and promulgated by linkages with collaborative consortia and third party intermediaries. The Work-Education Consortium and the National Manpower Institute have immensely aided the development of work-education councils operating in a variety of jurisdictional areas. Currently, work-education councils operate in a variety of jurisdictions. These include a

rural school district centered around one dominant community (School Administrative District No. 44, Bethel, Maine -- approximately 7,000 population), a county-wide operation (Gratiot County, Michigan -- 40,000 population and six school districts), a three-county operation with a population of over 356,000 living in both urban and rural environments (Peoria-Pekin Tri-County Area of Illinois), an 18-county three state area with a population of over 300,000 (Sioux Falls Area Education-Work Council, Sioux Falls, South Dakota), and a state wide operation with 20 local work-education councils of which six are rural, the Industry-Education Council of California, Burlingame, California.

There are several functions which most rural work-education councils should undertake:

- Information and data retrieval, development, dissemination and utilization;
- Full time core secretarial staff;
- Maintanance of a catalytic support role for existing institutions and groups;
- Maintain a neutral action forum with ongoing evolving coalition building both within and outside of communities;
- Minimize replication of services;
- Maintain mutually beneficial relationship between process and outcomes;
- Accept differences between interest groups participating in collaboration, but seek out commonalities which can lead to joint development efforts; and
- Start with "motherhood" and build toward increasingly demanding and complicated problem resolution.

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